The WOOD DUCK

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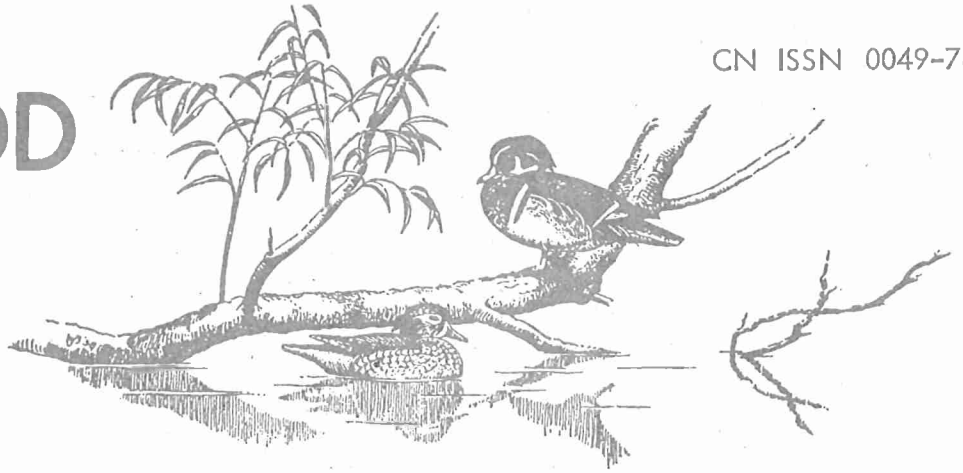

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

WESTDALE P.O. BOX 89052 HAMILTON, ONTARIO L8S 4R5

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Gardening for Wildlife

by Lyn Hanna-Folkes

I was approached recently by a member of the Club about references for professional restorationists, and I thought that offering a selection of reliable information sources for the home owner who is interested in naturalized gardens would be useful as well. So, I decided to provide a short chat about gardening for wildlife with reliable references about native plant identification. As a set, the guides and magazines recommended provide a good education about plants that are native in Ontario. If you must limit yourself to one book, however, most home owners would find The Ontario Naturalized Garden by Lorraine Johnson, the most valuable. It is useful whether you know nothing or are fairly knowledgeable about native plants. The tree, shrub, and wildflower identification guides are, of course, a basic need and make good companions for Johnson's book.

Guidelines for Creating Wildlife Habitat

Some guidelines are necessary for creating a natural habitat for wildlife. Wildlife needs food, water, and shelter. Planting should be done to mimic a natural environment. For example, in a forest there are generally three vegetative layers — the tree canopy, the understory (shrubs and young trees) and the herbaceous vegetation layer (flowers). These layers provide protection and proper niches for forest inhabitants. Plant in natural groupings rather than in rows or repetitive patterns. Choose native plants and some diversity of them, so that the environment will be able to offer support to the wildlife that you wish to attract. Most importantly, no chemicals should be applied to a naturalized garden in order to preserve the integrity of the natural environment and avoid harming the wildlife that visits your yard.

Plants that are native to this area are more likely to be winter hardy and disease resistant, and therefore, require less maintenance to grow successfully. With proper soil preparation and plant selection, a naturalized garden only needs to be watered during the first growing season in order to establish itself, and then only during severe droughts in subsequent years. Most natural environments do include a small proportion of non-native plants. If you are not sure which plants to include in your habitat then go for walks in local natural areas and learn to identify plants and try to understand the conditions that they

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prefer to grow under (references are listed below).

Choosing a theme may help you get focused and give your project more meaning. Would you like to attract butterflies by planting a meadow of nectar plants or are you interested in providing proper numbers of host plants which butterflies require for breeding? Maybe you are concerned about feeding migrating birds or you feel that creating more habitat for amphibians would be fun; use your imagination! Keep in mind that it is very important to make sure that the site you have to work with is suitable for your chosen theme. When new wildlife arrives in your yard, and it will if you naturalize, you will understand the significance of planting a 'habitat' garden.

Try one of these reliable information sources:

Guide Books

Farrar, J.L. 1995 Trees in Canada. Canadian forest Service, Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., Markham, ON
An accurate tree guide that corrects mistakes in and expands on, Hosie's Native Trees of Canada.

Hamilton Naturalists' Club. 1993 Hamilton-Wentworth Natural Areas Inventory. Edited by Audrey Heagy. Volumes 1 and 2.
Buy on at the Club's monthly meeting.

Johnson, L. 1995 The Ontario Naturalized Garden-The complete guide to using native plants. Whitecap Books, Toronto.
This is a complete and very accurate discussion of naturalization for those residing in Ontario. If you can only afford one book, buy this one.

Newcomb, Lawrence. 1977. Newcomb's Wildflower Guide. Little, Brown & Co. (Inc.). Toronto.
Use this with Peterson's guide and you are set for learning to identify wildflowers and a few shrubs.

Peterson, R.T. & M. McKenny. 1968. Peterson Field Guides: Wildflowers Northeastern/Northcentral North America. Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston.

Soper, J.H. and M.L. Heimburger. 1985. Shrubs of Ontario. ROM/The Alger Press, Toronto.
A good guide to native shrubs.

Magazines for Wildflower Education

Canadian Wildflower Society. Wildflower. Quarterly magazine. Speaks for itself. Write to: Canadian Wildflower Society, 4981 Highway 7 East, Unit 12A, Suite 228, Markham, ON, L3R 1N1; Tel: 416-294-9075.
Excellent seed exchange and propagation articles in particular.

Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton. Pappus. With a membership to the RBG, you will receive this magazine. Write to: Royal Botanical Gardens, P.O. Box 399, Hamilton, ON, L8N 3H8; or call: 905-527-1158 or 1-800-668-9449.
Jim Pringle has a very informative column called, "This Native Plant."

The following article was submitted by Don Scallen, Vice-President of the Halton-North Peel Naturalist Club. It was previously printed in the January-February 1996 issue of "The Esquesing".

Thoughts on the Escarpment Issue

by Don Scallen

I'm not politically astute. Politics has never held sway with my interests or emotions. The natural processes taking place in garden, field and woodland excite me far more than machinations in the political arena. I would much rather watch a spider spin its web or a towhee scuff fallen leaves for morsels of food, than a politician fulminate about the deficit.

I know now though, if I didn't before, that my simple pleasures depend in part on the actions of my political masters and that from now on, I had better pay close attention to what they are saying. I am dismayed with the threat to our remaining natural spaces — particularly the Niagara Escarpment — that has come about with the election of the current government at Queen's Park. Thus, while I would rather write about towhees or trilliums, the Escarpment

issue begs attention.

One summer while hiking through a mature mixed woodland on the Escarpment southwest of Orangeville, I came across a pair of Solitary Vireos tending a tightly-woven cup nest in the fork of a beech branch. Nearby was a bog where I stumbled upon an awe-inspiring congregation of showy lady's slippers. Every June I return to a special place in Halton forest on the Escarpment north of Milton where an old meadow is gradually giving way to nannyberry and serviceberry. I come to this place to see Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers, colourful denizens of this transition habitat. I have watched beaver cut through the placid waters of ponds south of Silver Creek and I have thrilled to the ephemeral opulence of escarpment wildflowers and the grand choruses of frogs in the spring.

I'm sure you all have your favourite escarpment places and memories. The Escarpment is the premier repository of nature in this part of the province and, as such, it nourishes the souls of those who appreciate life in all its myriad forms. It is not a pristine environment, but it is well worth protecting and it is, quite simply, the best nature we have. To lose the Escarpment to development, or to see its further degradation, would be extremely sad.

On April 4, 1990, UNESCO Director General, Frederico Mayor, spoke at the ceremony that designated the Niagara Escarpment as a World Biosphere Reserve. He said, in part: "The protection of this complex landscape within a rapidly urbanizing region is a tremendous feat of will and co-ordination requiring leadership, hard work, imagination, tenacity and a good dose of human psychology to apply it." I hope our club can contribute in some measure the leadership, hard work, imagination and tenacity that the Escarpment will require.

We need to speak on behalf of the creatures and plants of the Escarpment

Ted Chudleigh, MPP for Halton North, has stated that he supports the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP). However, he has voted against a resolution supporting the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC), the governmental body with a mandate to protect the Escarpment. He has also proposed that "some lands [currently protected under the plan] be taken out because they are two or three miles from the escarpment" (Georgetown Independent, December 6, 1995).

Let's consider this proposal first. The problem with it is that natural areas do not exist in isolation; they are integrally connected to the overall environment. Many Escarpment birds and other wildlife do not confine themselves to the relatively intact habitats on the Escarpment proper. They have a tendency to wander. The larger the buffer zone, the greater the opportunity for natural processes to endure on the Escarpment.

Much of the NEP land beyond the Escarpment proper is agricultural. Preserving this land use has an intrinsic value of its own in a southern Ontario where concrete and asphalt continue to smother farms. Beyond displacing farmland, development in these areas would bring greater numbers of people and their artifacts — cars, all-terrain vehicles, dogs cats, garbage and effluent closer to the core of the Niagara Escarpment. Inevitable despoliation would occur. *Protecting some of the land surrounding the spine of the Escarpment itself also leaves open an interesting option for a more enlightened future society — habitat restoration. Imagine actually increasing the extent of the Escarpment area forests and wetlands — a fanciful thought in 1995, but perhaps a possible future reality.*

With regards to Chudleigh's view that the NEC be eliminated and its powers transferred to the municipalities, consider the following: Instead of one organization with one mandate — to apply and interpret the NEP — this power would be divided among 30+ municipalities and 8 county or regional governments. Each of these governments would interpret the plan in their own way. Some municipalities would undoubtedly administer the NEP fairly, but others, suffering form budget constraints, development pressure and lack of expertise, could deal the Escarpment grievous blows. Niagara Escarpment protection would become a piecemeal affair and if some areas opted for greater development, it would become more difficult for others to resist. Consider as well, the difficulty

Escarpment supporters would have in monitoring the development decisions of all the various regional and municipal governments.

I don't think it terribly useful to invoke the money-making potential of the Niagara Escarpment in its defense. I realize that a lot of people use the Bruce Trail (Pat and Rosemarie Keogh, in their book, *The Niagara Escarpment, A Portfolio,* give a figure of 400,000 people a year). These people undoubtedly enrich some of the businesses in the Escarpment area. However, such a monetary return pales in comparison to that which could be gained by converting the Escarpment to quarries, estate homes and golf courses. Stressing that the monetary return of low impact Escarpment uses, such as hiking, could be maintained in perpetuity if the Escarpment was preserved, might carry some weight. But, if we promote primarily from the money angle, we are sure to lose. Developers could easily top any dollar figure forecasts environmentalists are able to come up with. What's more, they could tempt cash-strapped municipal governments with the tax dollars their developments could potentially generate.

We need to promote the Niagara Escarpment from a quality of life standpoint. As the Keoghs stated: "In the final analysis [the Niagara Escarpment] will be saved if the people of Ontario wish it to be — if they appreciate the Escarpment, not as a potential commodity, but rather for its irreplaceable natural beauty and sheer spiritual value."

We need to remind governments that there are limits to growth and that the vast population of the "Golden Horseshoe" needs more than malls, factories and highways. As Robert Bateman said in the introduction to *The Niagara Escarpment, A Portfolio*, "The more highrises and condos we build, the more we are going to need nearby places to get away to."

Of course we should do more than simply try to justify the protection of the Escarpment in terms of human needs and wants. We need to speak up on behalf of the creatures and plants of the Escarpment that depend utterly on its protection for their survival. And, related to this, even if the Escarpment is saved from injurious development for the foreseeable future, we need to deal with the impact of the increasing number of people year by year who will seek out the Escarpment as an escape from the city. The Escarpment could simply end up being "loved to death" — its wildflowers trampled by herds of hikers, its more timid creatures forced to flee or perish.

* * * * *

I've spent considerable time on this article. Outside my kitchen window, the sky is blue and the December sun beckons. It is 2:35 in the afternoon, just enough time for a brief walk on the Bruce Trail. I'm not likely to see any trillums or towhees, but I know I can find a woodpecker or two and the lovely form of leatherwood shrubs will cause me to pause and enjoy, as they have many times before.

* * * * *

A final word from Robert Bateman: "[The Escarpment] is a treasure beyond price. It would be a crime against nature and future generations of people to allow the Escarpment to be turned into a sterile, dull, packaged world."

House Finch Disease: Facts, Figures, and a Call for Help

Since early 1994, bird watchers throughout much of the East have been noticing House Finches with red, swollen, crusty eyes. These birds have a respiratory disease caused by *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, a bacterium that usually infects poultry. The disease poses no known risk to humans, but it can be fatal to the finches. Sometimes the birds' eyes swell so much that they can't see, so they have a hard time finding food. They may starve or die from cold weather.

"At first the disease was concentrated in east coast states between Massachusetts and Maryland," says André Dhondt, director of Bird Population Studies at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "But over the winter of 1994/95 it spread north to Quebec, south to Georgia, and west to Iowa and Missouri," Dhondt also notes that so far House Finches are the only species known to be affected.

The seriousness of the disease is so far undetermined. Many individual birds will certainly die, but the

species as a whole is not likely to be affected. "Most diseases in wild animals go through periods of increase and decrease without causing permanent changes in populations," says George Kollias, Professor of Wildlife Medicine at cornell University. "However, the total extent of this outbreak, how the disease is transmitted, whether species other than House Finches in the wild may be affected, and whether infected birds can recover and survive is not yet known."

Shaded area represents Eastern states and provinces included in the House Finch Disease Survey.

Bird watchers can help answer some of these questions, because the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is conducting a House Finch Disease Survey with the help of thousands of birders throughout the East. Data Collected at backyard feeders and sent to Cornell will go into a huge database that Lab biologists can analyze. "By combining survey data with another of our volunteer-assisted programs, Project FeederWatch, we'll be able to tell whether the disease is affecting House Finch numbers," says Dhondt. "Also, while House Finches are not endangered, other birds are. By tracking this outbreak, we'll learn how to respond if declining species are ever threatened by disease."

Last November, diseased birds showed up at about 20 percent of sites in Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. About 19 percent of sites in New Jersey and Massachusetts had sick birds that month, as did 17 percent in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and about 10 percent in New York, South Carolina, and Virginia.

If you see infected birds in your yard, do not become alarmed. The disease is not a threat to humans, and it's safe to continue feeding birds. But you can take some steps to keep the disease from spreading: Clean your bird feeders regularly – with a mild bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water). Dry the feeders well before filling them. Prevent overcrowding by adding extra feeders to your yard; the disease spreads when birds are in close contact.

Also consider participating in the Cornell survey. "We'd love to have more help," says Rick Bonney, director of education at the Lab of Ornithology. "Being part of the project is easy. We'll send you a survey kit with data forms and instructions. All you have to do is watch your backyard feeders as you usually do and record whether any House Finches visit. If they do, you'll note whether they show any disease symptoms. Then, once a month, you'll send your data forms to us so we can add your observations to our databank." Results of the Survey are published in the Lab's newsletter *Birdscope,* which all participants receive.

Participants in the lab's Project FeederWatch can receive survey kits for free. Other participants are asked to send a $7.00 fee, which helps to cover the costs of printing and mailing data forms, as well as the newsletter. For more information, or to sign up, write: **House Finch Survey, P.O. Box 11, Ithaca, NY 14850; or call 1-800-843-2473 (sign ups only).**

The Duration of Desire in Frogs and Toads

by Natalie Helferty

After the unpredictable spring we had, many of you may have noticed that frogs and toads can be very temperamental in their singing patterns. If you are new to "frogging", learning about amphibian breeding phenology may help you to detect all frog and toad species calling at their peak chorus.

Frogs and toads overwinter in holes in the ground, or in mud at the bottom of a water body, respectively, depending on whether they are mainly terrestrial (e.g. Wood frogs, Gray Treefrogs, and American toads) or mainly aquatic (e.g. Northern Leopard frogs, Green frogs and Bullfrogs). Because amphibians derive their body heat from their surroundings rather than producing it themselves, they will only be able to move when the surrounding temperature is warm enough. A heavy spring rain will

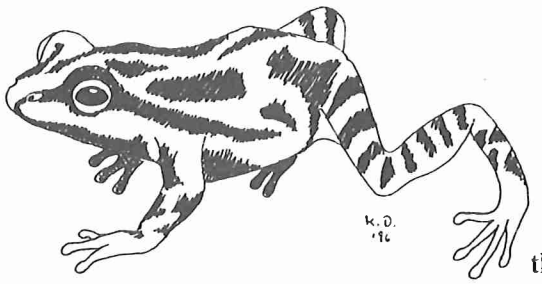
often warm up the ground and water enough for frogs and toads to emerge from overwintering sites.

Terrestrial species literally thaw out in the spring. With the exception of American toads, all frogs can have up to 40% of their bodies frozen when they are overwintering in the ground! They survive by producing substances which prevent their cells from breaking when their bodies freeze over the winter. Frogs can not be completely frozen though, so terrestrial frogs need a deep snow cover to insulate the ground and ice cannot form to the bottom of the pond.

Once frogs emerge, they migrate to breeding grounds and set up territories. When the temperature is right, the males start calling. Frogs that breed in temporary pools are "explosive" breeders. They have to breed quickly before the water evaporates, so eggs and tadpoles can survive. Explosive breeders do not have the time to set up territories and so instead migrate en masse to one suitable area to sing and breed. Thus, wood frogs and Fowler's toads, which are explosive breeders, can be found calling in groups for two weeks only.

Most of the frogs and toads in the Great Lakes Basin are prolonged breeders and call for several weeks. These species tend to be permanent-water breeders that overwinter in mud. They may be found at the edge of ponds until the temperature is warm enough for them to set up territories and start calling and breeding. Peak calling generally coincides with warm temperatures and wet weather.

Lured by the sound of calling males, females may travel long distances to breeding grounds. Once females arrive, they choose which male they want to breed with, based on the depth of the male's voice and the quality of his territory as an egg-laying site. Older males tend to have deeper voices and to be larger and so are able to successfully defend better sites.



It may take as little as one night for all the females to reach a breeding site, lay their eggs and leave, as in explosive breeders. In prolonged breeders, females arrive a few at a time over the breeding season. Once egg-laying is done, females leave immediately and generally do not lay a second clutch. Male frogs will continue calling to attract many females.

As you can see, timing is crucial in determining the peak calling period for many species, so thinking like a frog might help you decide when to survey. Going out when the temperature is appropriate for each species helps to ensure that you will hear them. To detect the explosive breeders, keep track of daytime temperatures and survey when it's warm, a day or two after a heavy spring shower. The prolonged breeders breed later and longer, so timing is not as crucial. A warm, wet evening should result in good calling for all species.

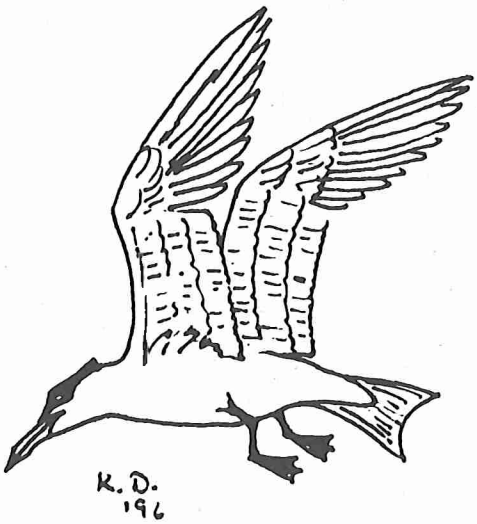
Re-printed from the
Marsh Monitoring Program
Newsletter
Number 2, 1995
Long Point Bird Observatory

Do Birds Play? They Sure Do!

by John Struger
and John Fischer

While conducting field work in the Dunnville Marsh area, on July 25, 1994, we had the unique opportunity to observe some unusual behaviour that confirms to us that birds play. While travelling by motorized canoe on the Grand River, near Byng Island, we observed a solitary, immature Caspian Tern *(Sterna caspia)* flying above, and along side of us. In its bill was a small shiner-like fish, which it appeared to drop. The tern then tilted its head, dropped down a bit, caught the fish in mid-air, and resumed its initial altitude while continuing to slowly fly into the wind. It then proceeded to do this approximately ten times, all the while maintaining its general direction, speed, and altitude. There was a strong steady 15 knot breeze out of the northwest, that late sunny afternoon. This likely had a lot to do with the young tern being able to play the drop and catch game we observed. The apparent ease with which the tern recaptured the fish so frequently in mid-flight, suggested to

holding the fish. We felt at the time, and still do, that the young tern was thoroughly enjoying the game it was playing.



Welty (1975) described play in birds as an activity with an important component of trial and error learning. Young birds do not indulge in as much play as young mammals do, probably because so much of a bird's behaviour repertory is instinctive. Nevertheless, the young of many bird species do play, and thereby learn more about their environment, and improve skills that will be of use in adult life. Welty goes on to describe falcons, crows, frigate birds, gulls, terns, eagles, kites, vultures, swifts, swallows, rooks, ravens, and other birds all playing with inanimate objects. Welty also described how adult Belted Kingfishers *(Megaceryle alcyon)*, Northern Harriers *(Circus cyaneus)*, and Peregrine Falcons *(Falco peregrinus)*, attempted to educate their young in food capture, by dropping food items in mid-air, and expecting their offspring to recapture them.

In summary, we believe that the immature Caspian Tern was playing a game of drop and catch. After observing how much fun the young tern seemed to be having on that warm summer afternoon, we mused about how enjoyable it would have been, if our own parents had allowed us to play more freely with our food.

Literature Cited:

Welty, J.C. 1975. The Life of Birds. Second Edition. W.B. Saunders Co. Toronto, Ontario. 623p.

Book Review

The following is a book review by Francis R. Cook of ***The Reptiles and Amphibians of the Hamilton Area: A Historical Summary and the Results of The Hamilton Herpetological Atlas by William G. Lamond,*** *taken from The Canadian Field-Naturalist 105(4); 612-615; 109(4);494; 1995.*

Ever faster, time is running out on the last opportunities to conserve some vestiges of the natural world. Increased awareness is manifest in the spreading focus on the totality of life or "biodiversity" (for example, the Canadian Museum of Nature's serial, *Canadian Biodiversity,* subsequently re-rechristened *Global Biodiversity*). As consumptive human demand for resources and space reaches into all corners of the environment, ever-increasingly precise data is demanded on occurrence, relative abundance, and relationships of individuals and ecosystems to plead for their continued existence. Even those relatively most neglected vertebrate groups, amphibians and reptiles, have justly received a share of this attention: provincial field guides detailing their distribution (the latest for Alberta — see review in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 108(3): 379-380). Status reports of individual species (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, COSEWIC, have been produced and released in manuscript, some formally published — see *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 103(4): 486-496, 109(2): 182-191) and provincial atlases, led in Canada by Quebec and Ontario (see reviews in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 105(4): 612-615; 109(4): 493); special attention on overall amphibian declines (C.A. Bishop and K.E. Pettit, *Editors*, 1992. Declines in Canadian Amphibian Populations: Designing a National Monitoring Strategy. Canadian Wildlife Service, Occasional Paper Number 76, 120 pages) and even a full symposium on a single species (B. Johnson and V. Menzies, *Editors*, 1993. International Symposium and Workshop on the Conservation of the Eastern Massasauga, *Sistrurus catenatus catenatus, Edited by* Bob Johnson and Vi Menzies, Metropolitan Toronto Zoo, Toronto, Ontario. 132 pages).

However important the broad context, ultimately conservation is a local issue; site-by-site decisions taken incrementally decide the fate of each species. Of first importance is knowing where populations of species exist. Presentation of this detail is therefore especially valuable: in Ontario preliminary data on

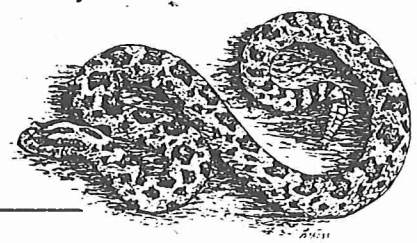
distributions in the vicinity of two urban centres have been mapped (F.R. Cook, 1981. Amphibians and Reptiles of the Ottawa District. *Trail & Landscape* 15(2): 75-109; B. Johnson. 1982. Amphibians and Reptiles of Metro Toronto. Toronto Field-Naturalists Club. Toronto, Ontario) and a detailed systematic survey pioneered for one other (G.R. Francis and C.A. Campbell. 1983. The Herpetofauna of the Waterloo Region, Ontario. *Ontario Field Biologist* 37(2): 51-86), the latter forming the inspiration for the current atlas, a tribute to the tremendous impetus to conservation of amphibians and reptiles given by the extensive work and reports of Craig Campbell in southern Ontario throughout the 1960s to 1980s.

This atlas adds another important Ontario urban Centre, Hamilton, covering the area enclosed within a 40.2 km radius centred at Dundurn Castle, and thus taking in portions of the political counties or regional municipalities of Brant, Haldimand-Norfolk, Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, and Wellington, from the southern portion of Mississauga in the northeast to Brantford in the southwest. Detailed species accounts are presented for 31 species which are still thought to exist in the area, 5 additional species are given as of former occurrence, 7 of doubtful occurrence, and 3 as introduced, for a total of 47 (a significant portion of the 89 totals, including introductions, recorded for all of Canada. For the first category, the accounts are detailed and give Life History, Ontario Distribution, Hamilton Area Pre-1960, Hamilton area 1960-1983, Hamilton Herpetofaunal Atlas 1984-1992. The first gives a thorough and up-to-date survey of the existing literature, the others discuss the records of each period in detail with references and personal communications. Each species is illustrated with a photograph (all by Kathleen Gardiner, except for one each by Christine Bishop and Don Sutherland) and many additionally decorated by sketches (by Premek Hamr, Marlene Ross, Denys Gardiner, and Chris Gardiner). The core of the book is its maps (developed by Brian Klinkenberg with data entry by Kathleen Gardiner). These are based on a system of 2 km squares. Although not as informative as plotting the records precisely, this method has great appeal for a cooperative survey as it challenges observers to fill in squares for each species and thus psychologically gives impetus to searching ever more thoroughly for rarer forms. The number, 1142 squares, assures a fairly good resolution. The successes of the venture speaks for the method: the Hamilton Herpetological Atlas study team of students employed in 1988-1990 accounted for 6907 records, volunteers from the Hamilton Field-Naturalists' Club during 1987-1992 for 2504, those from the province-wide Ontario Herpetological Survey, 1984-1992 (see above) 2453, and landowners through contact with the study team contributed 2956 records.

Prefixing accounts of species are sections containing Acknowledgements, an Introduction, a Literature Summary for the area, Methods, a List of Volunteers, Conservation Perspective, Format and Explanation of species Accounts, Cited Observers and List of Symbols and Abbreviations. Valuable inclusions are four base maps of the study area which show roads, remaining forest cover, species diversity, and political divisions. A strong point of the treatment is the lengthy discussion of the Blue Spotted-Jefferson Salamander Complex (*Ambystoma laterale, A. Jeffersonianum* and their hybrids) first in the introductory section and again in the species accounts. These have been written in close consultation with J.P. Bogart, University of Guelph, who cooperated with the project by analyzing specimens in his laboratory, and underscore the vital importance of voucher collections and locality-by-locality examination of variation. The detailed discussions included in each account of rarer species of records and possible statues is also of special value. A six-page bibliography concludes the atlas.

This publication, a model of thoroughness and quality, is not just an essential stepping-stone for conservation in the Hamilton area, which arguably is now the best-documented area in Canada for amphibians and reptiles, but also should serve as an inspiration to naturalists' groups throughout the country who consider initiating local surveys. Also it is a valuable reference for any naturalist in eastern Canada for its discussion of literature and observations of natural history for species common to this wider region.

It is to be hoped that the Hamilton Field-Naturalists' Club will use this milestone as a base and continue to monitor these groups, document further changes, and fight for the local preservation of amphibian and reptile habitat based on its data. All those who contributed should feel justly proud of this beginning, not the least Don McLean who designed the publication and carried out typesetting and layout which have contributed materially to its ease of use. ❋



Noteworthy Bird Records

by Rob Dobos

Total species recorded during 1996 to February 29: **117**. For underlined species or dates a written (or photographic) documentation is required by the Hamilton Bird Records Committee. Capitalized species require documentation by the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Observers: Linda Burr (LB), Dan Campbell (DC), Barb Charlton (BC), Jim Cram (JC), Rob Dawson (RDw), Rob Dobos (RD), Jim Dowall (JD), Brian Driscoll (BDr), R. Gifford (RG), Mark Jennings (MJ), J. Kelly (JK), Ursula Kolster (UK), Nancy Mahony (NM), Jim Matson (JMa), Kevin McLaughlin (KM), C. McNail (CM), Libor Michalak (LM), John Miles (JM), John Olmsted (JO), Rose Petersen (RP), Bill Smith (BS), Ian Smith (IS), Mike Street (MS), Doug Tate (DT), Rohan van Twest (RvT), Rob Waldhuber (RW), Phil Walker (PW), Many Observers (m.obs.).

Legend:
* -first occurrence for the year
F -first occurrence for the migration
L -last occurrence for the migration
HSA -Hamilton Study Area

Plumages,etc.:
m. -male
f. -female
ad. -adult
imm. -immature
1st win. -first winter
2nd win. -second winter

Counties/Regions:
Brant [*BR*]
Haldimand-Norfolk [*HN*]
Halton [*HL*]
Hamilton-Wentworth [*HW*]
Niagara [*NG*]
Peel [*PL*]
Waterloo [*WT*]
Wellington [*WL*]

FEBRUARY 1996:

Red-throated Loon: One on Lake Ontario off Burloak Park [*HL*] Feb 25 * (RD,BC,MJ).
Red-necked Grebe: One at Desjardins Canal, Dundas [*HW*] Feb 1-11 (*fide* MS;KM,RDw); one off Sioux Lookout [*HL*] Feb 25 (LB,DC).
Double-crested Cormorant: One at Windermere Basin [*HW*] Feb 25 (KM,RDw).
Great Blue Heron: One at Taquanyah C.A. [*HN*] Feb 3 (JM).
Tundra Swan: Three at Dundas Marsh [*HW*] Feb 22 F (UK).
Snow Goose: One near Cayuga [*HN*] Jan 27 (CM,JK); the resident ad. white morph at Desjardins Canal Feb 18 (RDw).
Wood Duck: One m. at Conc 5 at Spencer Creek [*HW*] Feb 4 * (RD,BC).

Northern Pintail: One m. at Conc 5 at Spencer Creek Feb 4 (RD,BC); one f. at Desjardins Canal Feb 18 (RDw).
Northern Shoveler: Two at Windermere Basin Feb 22 (RD).
Canvasback: One f. at Windermere Basin Feb 17 (KM *et al.*).
Redhead: Two at Conc 5 at Spencer Creek Feb 4 (RD,BC); 40 at Burlington Beach Canal [*HL*] Feb 24 (KM,RDw).
Ring-necked Duck: Five m. at Hamilton Bay at CCIW [*HW*] Feb 9-23 (RD); five at Windermere Basin Feb 17 (KM *et al.*).
Greater Scaup: About 5000 off Fifty Rd [*HW*] Feb 25 (RD,BC).
Lesser Scaup: Three at Conc 5 at Spencer Creek Feb 4 (RD,BC).
King Eider: Up to six f.,two 1st win. m. off Appleby Line to Sioux Lookout through Feb (m.obs.).
Black Scoter: One f. off Grays Rd. Hamilton [*HW*] Feb 11 (KM,RDw); 1m.,1f. at Burlington Beach Canal Feb 25 (KM,RDw); one f. off Burloak Park Feb 25 (MJ,RD,BC).
Surf Scoter: 25 at Burlington Beach Canal Feb 11 (KM,RDw).
White-winged Scoter: About 2000 off Burlington Lakeshore Feb 17 (KM *et al.*); 130 off Van Wagners Beach [*HW*] Feb 22 (RD); one partial albino m. off Sioux Lookout Feb 24 (KM).
Hooded Merganser: Two at Conc 5 at Spencer Creek Feb 4 (RD,BC); two at High Level Bridge [*HW*] Feb 9 (RD).
Turkey Vulture: Two at Oneida 4th Line E of Hwy 6 [*HN*] Feb 1-17 (JM *et al.*).
Bald Eagle: One ad. at N Shore Hamilton Bay [*HW*] Feb 22-25 (RD,BC).
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 9 reports from throughout HSA during Feb (m.obs.).
Cooper's Hawk: 4 reports from throughout HSA during Feb (m.obs.).
Red-shouldered Hawk: One ad. at Hwy 6 N of Campbellville Rd [*HW*] Feb 15*-19 (RD).
Red-tailed Hawk: One dark morph juv. at Windermere Basin Feb 11 (KM,RDw).
Merlin: One win. in Dundas Feb 1-on (*fide* MS).
Peregrine Falcon: One imm. at CCIW [*HL*] Feb 21-27 (NM *et al.*).
Gray Partridge: Five at Oneida 2nd Line [*HN*] Feb 10 * (LM *et al.*).
American Coot: One at Sioux Lookout Feb 8 (RD); one at Windermere Basin Feb 15 (RD).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: One 2nd win. at Sioux Lookout Feb 24 * (KM).
Glaucous Gull: Two at Burlington Lakeshore Feb 17 (KM *et al.*); two at Hamilton Bay off CCIW Feb 22 (RD); one at Cootes Paradise [*HW*] Feb 23 (RD).
Long-eared Owl: One at Bronte Woods [*HL*] Feb 25 (RD,BC).
Short-eared Owl: One at RR20 & RR55 [*HN*] Feb 13 (JM).
Horned Lark: Three at Woodland Cemetery [*HW*] Feb 9 F (RD); 200 at Jerseyville Rd W of Hwy 52 [*HW*] Feb 18 (RD).
Tufted Titmouse: Two at River Rd W of Cayuga [*HN*] Feb 3 (RG); one at N Shore Cootes Paradise [*HW*] Feb 23 (RD).
TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: One at Christie C.A. [*HW*] Feb 4 * (BS,PW,JC).
Hermit Thrush: One at University of Guelph [*WL*] Feb 2-16 (DT,RvT); one at Christie C.A. Feb 18 (RD).
Northern Shrike: One at Hwy 401 E of Milton [*HL*] Feb 1 (RD); one at Middletown Rd [*HW*] Feb 6 (RDw); one at RR552 S of Kirkwall [*HW*] Feb 9 (RD); one at Christie C.A. Feb 18 (RD); one at Foreman Rd S of Gore Rd [*HW*] Feb 18 (RD); one at Wellington Rd 35 N of Gore Rd [*WL*] Feb 18 (RD).
SPOTTED TOWHEE: One imm. m. at Thorndale Cres. Hamilton [*HW*] Feb 3-29 (UK;m.obs.); one imm. m. at Saw-whet Golf Course, Bronte Rd [*HL*] Feb 1-21 at least (m.obs.).
White-crowned Sparrow: One imm. at Hopkins Tract [*HW*] Feb 18 (RDw); one imm. at Fifty Rd near lakeshore Feb 25 (RD,BC).
Snow Bunting: 150 at Jerseyville Rd W of Hwy 52 Feb 18 (RD).
Red-winged Blackbird: Four at Green Mt Rd. Saltfleet [*HW*] Feb 25 F (RD,BC).

Common Grackle: Seven at Hatton Dr, Ancaster [*HW*] Feb 25 * (RP,IS).
Brown-headed Cowbird: 20 at Bingham Rd, Hamilton [*HW*] Feb 18 (JMa).
Pine Grosbeak: One at Conc 5 E of Valens Rd [*HW*] Feb 4 (RD,BC); eight at Christie C.A. Feb 4-5 (JO;BS); 11 at RBG Centre, Plains Rd [*HL*] Feb 5 (JO,JD); 2m.,1f. at Creighton Dr, Dundas [*HW*] Feb 19 (RDw,BDr).
Purple Finch: One at Hatton Dr, Ancaster Feb 3-28 (RP,IS).
Common Redpoll: Up to 30 at Hatton Dr, Ancaster Feb 1-on (RP,IS).
Hoary Redpoll: One imm. m. at First St N, Stoney Creek [*HW*] Feb 1-29 (RW;m.obs.).
Pine Siskin: 21 at Hatton Dr, Ancaster Feb 11 (RP,IS); six at Thorndale Cres, Hamilton Feb 17-18 (UK); five at Christie C.A. Feb 18 (RD).

Please send your bird records for March 1996 by April 10 to Rob Dobos at 178 Cedarbrae Ave, Waterloo, Ont., N2L 4S3; or phone (519) 888-0553 (eves); **or e-mail to: rob.dobos@cciw.ca**

Please note that after April 15, my new address and phone number will be: 1156 5th Conc. Rd. W., R.R. #2, Waterdown, L0R 2H2; (905) 659-7732

HAMILTON BIRDING HOTLINE: 905-648-9537

Hamilton Christmas Bird Count 1995□

by Mark Jennings

Hamilton, Ontario: 43°16'N, 79°52'W as described 1972, center at junction of York and Dundurn Sts. Dec 26; 4:30 A.M.-5:30 P.M. Temp: 14°F (-10°C) to 23°F (-5°C). Wind: west 11 mph. (17.5 km/hr). Snow cover: 4", still water frozen, moving water partly frozen. A.M. clear, P.M. partly cloudy. Observers: 57 in field in 24 parties (non-owling), plus 8 at feeders (11.5 hours); 5.5 hours and 48 miles owling. Total party hours 186; party miles 592; 134 hours and 122 miles on foot, 52 hours and 470 miles by car.

Common Loon 1; Pied-billed Grebe 1; Double-crested Cormorant 2; Great Blue Heron CW; Tundra Swan 7; Mute Swan 31; Canada Goose 5109; American Black Duck 176; Mallard 2452; Northern Pintail 31; Northern Shoveler 9; Gadwall 46; Canvasback 43; Redhead 17; Ring-necked Duck 2; Greater Scaup 1369; Lesser Scaup 2244; *scaup species 32*; Oldsquaw 105; Black Scoter 4; Surf Scoter 2; White-winged Scoter 52; Common Goldeneye 2117; Bufflehead 371; Hooded Merganser 12; Common Merganser 1772; Red-breasted Merganser 47; Ruddy Duck 1; *duck species 5,000*; Bald Eagle 2i 1a; Northern Harrier 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk 10; Cooper's Hawk 2; Northern Goshawk 3; Red-tailed Hawk 119; American Kestrel 20; Merlin 1; Ring-necked Pheasant 6; Ruffed Grouse 3; American Coot 3; Ring-billed Gull 808; Herring Gull 553; Iceland Gull 1; Glaucous Gull 30; Great Black-backed Gull 109; Rock Dove 1436; Mourning Dove 759; Eastern Screech Owl 8; Great Horned Owl 10; Long-eared Owl 2; Belted Kingfisher 8; Red-bellied Woodpecker 7; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker CW; Downy Woodpecker 176; Hairy Woodpecker 56; *woodpecker species 1*; Northern Flicker 13; Pileated Woodpecker 3; **Eastern Phoebe 1**; Horned Lark 2; Blue Jay 397; American Crow 4140; Black-capped Chickadee 1711; Tufted Titmouse 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch 33; White-breasted

Nuthatch 204; Brown Creeper 36; Carolina Wren 1; Winter Wren 10; Golden-crowned Kinglet 39; Eastern Bluebird 3; Hermit Thrush 2; American Robin 20; Northern Mockingbird 15; Cedar Waxwing 118; Northern Shrike 14; European Starling 34,629; Cardinal 441; **Spotted Towhee CW**; American Tree Sparrow 709; Field Sparrow 2; Song Sparrow 70; Swamp Sparrow 27; White-throated Sparrow 13; White-crowned Sparrow 7; Dark-eyed Junco 705; Lapland Longspur 12; Snow Bunting 329; Red-winged Blackbird 4; Eastern Meadowlark 6; Common Grackle 2; Brown-headed Cowbird 82; Pine Grosbeak 15; Purple Finch 2; House Finch 1054; White-wing Crossbill 2; Common Redpoll 86; Pine Siskin 103; American Goldfinch 382; *finch species 20*; House Sparrow 2481.

Totals: Species 94; Individuals 77,530
Introduced species: Trumpeter Swan 9; Whooper Swan 1

Observers: Clive Baugh, Christine Bishop, Hazel Broker, Judith Burke, John Carson, Jerry Chapple, Nina Chapple, Barb Charlton, Michael Clark, George Coker, Ted Cole, Jim Cram, Bill Crins, Robert Curry, Robert Dawson, Robert Dinniwell, Ted Dinniwell, Rob Dobos, Jim Dowall, Brian Driscoll, Wayne Elvins, Lois Evans, Hilary Galant, Denys Gardiner, Gary Hanna, Kevin Hannah, Jim Heslop; ***Mark Jennings (compiler)***, Shirley Klement, Bill Lamond, Joan Little, Rick Ludkin, Wolfgang Luft, Bruce MacIntosh, Sue McCullough, Kevin McLaughlin, Marg McRoberts, Greg Meek, Jamie Miles, John Miles, Mathew Mills, George Naylor, Minnie Odenkirchen, John Olmsted, Rose Petersen, Brian Pomfret, Alfred Senior, Bill Smith, Ian Smith, Rick Snyder, Bob Stamp, Mike Street, Sam Tabone, Robert Waldhuber, Jul Wojnowski, Alan Wormington, Brian Wylie. **(Hamilton Naturalists' Club)**

Correction: Hamilton CBC 1994
Winter Wren 19; should read 14
Golden-crowned Kinglet 104; should read 109

Fish & Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project

The following letter was written by Mr. John D. Hall, M.C.I.P., R.P.P., Project Manager of the Northeastern Shoreline Project, part of the Fish & Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project in Hamilton Harbour and Cootes Paradise. In this letter, he updates the progress of the project and requests Club member's help in order to complete it.

I am pleased to update the Hamilton Naturalists' Club on progress at the Northeastern Shoreline site. We have completed the islands and substantially completed the mainland.

By the end of March, I expect to have all final grading and top soil treatment completed ready for landscaping. The Halton Region conservation Authority will source plants, landscape the mainland and islands, install decking at the lookout and construct the walking trail. Landscaping of the mainland should occur between April 1st-30th, using for the most part, bare root stock. The islands will be planted in August once the bird activity has declined. The wetlands will be planted in July following the normal June high water level. The deck and trail work will be carried out later in mid summer once planting is completed.

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club funding commitment of approximately $20,000 for the lookout and $20,000 for the project is now required to assist the project to maintain our cashflow for these works. I have spoken to Betty Blashill and understand the funds will be forwarded to the DFO in two payments, March 6th and during April.

John Fischer of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club has worked closely with me on the design and construction of the lookout. I think you will be pleased with the raised lookout as it will afford excellent viewing opportunities.

There are four additional opportunities for the Club to assist in this project's construction as follows:

1. Offshore planting of water lilies behind the islands on April 20th: Six volunteers from the Naturalists' Club are needed to assist the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, RBG and DFO.
2. May 11th volunteer planting day for one area of headland beach grass organized by the BARC in association with the Halton RCA.
3. Volunteer planting days for mainland and island wetland planting, July 6th and 13th in association with the BARC and RBG.
4. Integrating the planting of some special native trees as per John Fischer's previous correspondence.

The fish & Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project is very grateful for the support of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club and will suitably acknowledge the Club's efforts at an official opening ceremony for the project tentatively scheduled for a date between September 16th-20th, 1996.

Donations

The following is a list of people who made a donation to the Club from September 1995 to the end of January 1996.

Jocelyn Neysmith
Gillian Quick
Keith & Mary Doering
Ron Dermott
Joan Nasby
Dennis & Gwen Lewington
Joyce Litster
Ivor & Jennie Mansell
William Luton
Phyllis Vair
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Letters

Dear Editor:
As I approach middle age, or maybe I'm already there, I'm not sure, I feel overwhelmed by the state of our environment as it continues to be stressed. This winter I've been writing letters as I've never done before. My concern specifically has been the air quality in Hamilton. After those horrible high level days all too numerous last summer, I began to take more notice of what was going on. I've written to Sheila Copps — our now deposed Environment Minister — twice and to our local Environmental Chairman, Dave Wilson with my concerns but to no avail. I guess the reason being that they are both politicians. I've also written letters to the editor and more recently to Dofasco and Stelco. This letter is to give credit to Stelco for answering my letter with statistics and information that they are very proud of and assurances for continued commitment. Rick Lane the Environment Manager at Hilton works gave me his phone number to contact him further if I had any further questions or concerns. Quite admirable I thought. So I guess what I'm saying to you Wood Duck readers is: start writing letters if you feel strongly about something. Who knows, something one of us says might hit a nerve, make an impact and ultimately make a difference.

It's Worth a try!

Yours very truly,

Pamela Watts

Walkathon 1996

Once again it's time to start training for the **1996 Nature Walkathon** which is being held on **Saturday, June 8th.** So, shine up your shoes and get ready for this exciting event!

Amphibian Re-introduction Symposium

Monday
April 15th
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Royal Botanical Gardens

There will be a series of presentations during the morning, followed by a number of workshops during the afternoon where specific topics relating to the re-introduction of amphibians in Cootes Paradise in 1997 will be discussed in-depth.

For more information and to register, contact:

Brian Pomfret
905-527-1158 ext 248

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, April 8 8:00 p.m.

Location: RBG Centre
680 Plains Rd. West
Burlington

Wild Things — The Hidden World of Animals

Michael Runtz

Don't miss this meeting which features one of our most entertaining and informative speakers!

Please remember to bring your own cup to the meeting as there are only a few cups available.

Next Month

Butterflies — A Measure of Our Survival

Joanna Chapman & Brian McKibbin

Monday, April 15, 7:30 p.m.

Bird Study Group

Location: RBG Nature Centre,
Old Guelph Road,
Dundas

This is an informal but interesting meeting featuring a discussion of recent bird sightings, an identification session and a workshop, film or set of slides about some aspect of birds. If you're a beginner birdwatcher, come out to learn more about birds. If you're an expert birder, come out to share your knowledge and enthusiasm. This month will feature:
– **Kayo Roy: Birds of Attu**

Organizer: Bruce Duncan 519-622-4709

Saturday, April 27 9:30-noon

Junior Naturalists' Club

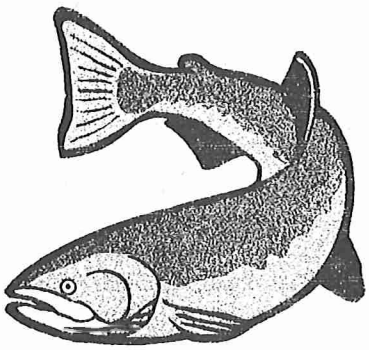
Location: Cootes Paradise
Hamilton, ON

All About Fish

We hope to get a look at the Cootes Paradise Fishway and learn to identify individual fish.

Please note: these activities are limited to Junior Naturalists' Club members. Meetings are held monthly and led by enthusiastic, knowledgeable, volunteer members of the HNC. If your children would like to have fun while learning about nature, please call **Roslynne** for details on how they can join the Club.

Organizer: Roslynne Price 681-2276



There will be no April Meeting

Plant Study Group

Location: Lyn Hanna–Folkes
478 Hwy 53 East
Ancaster

The Plant Study Group is an informal meeting of those interested in plants and who wish to share ideas and learn more about this fascinating aspect of the natural world. Whether a beginner or a seasoned botanist, come out and enjoy the lively discussions. This month will feature:

Organizer: Lyn Hanna-Folkes 648-1945

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1 to May 15
Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch
This is conducted at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area on Ridge Rd. Above the escarpment in Grimsby. It is one of the best spring viewing spots for migrant hawks in Ontario. Counters are on hand daily. The better days are when winds are southerly. No guarantees.
Contact: Mike Street 648-3737

Friday April 5, 10:00 a.m.
Come Home to Red Hill
"Friends of Red Hill Valley" encourages everyone to continue the Hamilton tradition of spending Good Friday in the valley. There will be a choice of family hikes in all parts of the 1600 acre urban wilderness
Contact: Don McLean 664-8796

Sunday April 28, 2:00 p.m.
Red Hill Spring
Enjoy a spring hike through the valley to see early wildflowers and migrant birds. Meet at the creek below Rosedale Arena (south end of Cochrane Rd).
Leader: Bruce Duncan 519-622-4709

Sunday May 5 9:00 a.m.
Clean-up at Short Hills
Leader: John Fischer 643-3837

Saturday May 11 morning
Natural Areas Clean-up
Contact: John Struger 547-5116

Saturday May 26 9:00 a.m.
Spring in Short Hills
Leaders: Pat & Brian Burgon 648-6153

The March WOOD DUCK was assembled and mailed by:

Norm Pomfret
Marge and Norm Ralston
Ian Reid
Doris Rundle
Maria Sedgwick
Jim and Jean Stollard

Thanks everyone!

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FON Representative:
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HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

Membership Fees 1995-96

Life Member	$350.00
Active Member	20.00
Active Senior Member	17.00
Joint Members	30.00
Joint Senior Members	25.00
Family Membership	35.00
Student Member	10.00
Corresponding Member	15.00
Junior Nats - first child	30.00
Junior Nats - additional children	20.00
Honorary Life Member	None

HNC Publications

Natural Areas Inventory Vols I & II	*$60.00*
Herpetofaunal Atlas	*20.00*
Checklist of Birds of H-W	*1.00*
Date Guide to Birds of H-W	*1.00*
Citizens Guide to Action	*Free*
Naturally Hamilton: A Guide to Green Spaces of Hamilton-Wentworth	*Free*

The Wood Duck

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The HNC promotes public interest in the study, conservation and appreciation of our natural heritage. Meetings are held monthly Sept-May inclusive and field events are scheduled throughout the year. The Hamilton Naturalists' Club is a registered charity and all donations above the regular membership fee are tax deductible.

Send noteworthy bird records to: **Rob Dobos, 1156 5th Conc. Rd. W., R.R. #2 Waterdown, ON L0R 2H2** **Hamilton Birding Hotline: 648–9537**

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